

647
REFLECTIONS

ON THE

SEVEN DAYS

OF THE

WEEK.

BY

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ADVERTISEMENT.

IT is hoped, that the good sense and exalted piety of these Reflections may render them of some use to the world in general: And those who had the happiness of a personal acquaintance with the Author, will be pleased to have an opportunity of profiting by her thoughts, now they are no longer permitted to enjoy the blessing of her example.

S U N D A Y.

“**O** LORD, thou hast searched me out,
 “and known me: Thou knowest my
 “down-fitting and mine up-rising: Thou
 “art about my path, and about my bed, and
 “spiest out all my ways.”

How true, how astonishing is this thought! Almighty God, my maker, is ever present with me. He is infinite in being; and therefore must be every where. He is infinite in knowledge; and therefore every thing must be known to him. No creature is too inconsiderable for his notice, who is the maker of all, and “careth
 “for all alike.” The friends, the relations, and acquaintance, whom I see and converse with every day, know not half so much of my conduct as He does, nor are half so attentive to it. How hourly careful should I be, then, to approve myself to him! Among my relations and friends there are some whom I regard more than the rest, either out of greater affection for their goodness and kindness; or out of reverence for their greater wisdom and dignity; or out of interest, as being capable of doing me more good or hurt. All these motives of the highest regard are joined in Him. His excellence is more than thought can conceive: Whatever is beautiful, or good, or amiable in the world, flows from Him as its source. In Him is all greatness and majesty, all wisdom and knowledge; every thing that is glorious, awful, venerable.

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My hourly dependence is upon Him, and all my expectations through an eternity to come. From him I have received my life, my being, every power and faculty of soul and body. Every innocent delight I enjoy, is his gift: In every danger, he is my present help. No power but his could guide me safely through the intricate mazes of life. Hitherto his providence has carefully watched over me, and his right-hand has held me up: And through all my future life, He who is truth itself, has promised never to fail me nor forsake me, if on my part I will but serve him faithfully, as in my baptismal vow I have promised to do. That blessed covenant I am going to renew, by partaking of the holy sacrament. Had not our blessed Saviour died to redeem mankind, we must all have appeared before an all-seeing God, of infinite justice and holiness, without security of being considered otherwise than as objects of displeasure. But we know that he looks upon us now as objects of the tenderest mercy. He invites us to "pour out our hearts before him" at all times: "To call upon him in the time of trouble:" "To look unto him and be saved." O my soul, in all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths!

Let me then ask myself, as in his sight, What is the general turn of my temper, and disposition of my mind? My most trifling words and actions are observed by him; and every thought is naked to his eye. Could I suppose the king, or any the greatest person I have any knowledge of,

of, were within reach of observing my common daily behaviour, though unseen by me, should I not be very particularly careful to preserve it in every respect decent and becoming? Should I allow myself in any little froward humours? Should I not be ashamed to appear peevish and ill-natured? Should I use so much as one harsh or unhandsome expression even to my equal, or my meanest inferior, even were I ever so much provoked? much less should I behave irreverently to my parents or superiors. This awful Being, in whom I live and move, and from whom no obscurity can hide me, by whom the very hairs of my head are all numbered, He knows the obligations of every relation in life: He sees in their full light the reciprocal duties of parents and children, of husbands and wives, of neighbours and fellow-servants. He knows the aggravated guilt of every offence against these ties of society, however we may be disposed to treat them as trifles: and every piece of stubbornness and pride, of ill-humour and passion, of anger and resentment, of fullness and perverseness, exposes us to his just indignation.

MONDAY.

“**BLESSED** are they that do hunger and
 “thirst after righteousness.”—Our Lord
 and Saviour has pronounced this blessedness,
 and through his grace I hope to partake of it.

Hunger and thirst naturally prompt us to seek, without delay, the means of satisfying them. What then is the food of the mind? Whole-some instruction and religious meditation. If then I sincerely do hunger and thirst after righteousness, I shall be frequently feeding my mind with pious books and thoughts. I shall make the returns of these meals as regular as I can, and seldom shall I find any necessity strong enough to make me miss them a whole day together.—But then it ought to be remembered too, that even these, the best hours of my life, ought never to encroach upon the duties and employments of my station, whatever they may be. Am I in a superior station in life? My duty then probably takes in a large compass; and I am accountable to my Maker for all those talents intrusted with me by him for the benefit of my fellow-creatures. I must not think of living to myself alone; or of devoting that time to imitate the employment of angels, which was given me for the service of men. Religion must be my chief end, and my best delight; it must regulate all I think or do: but whatever my station is, I must fulfil all its duties. Have I leisure and genius? I must give a due portion of my time to the elegant improvements of life; to the study of those sciences that are an ornament to human nature; to such things as may make me amiable and engaging to all whom I converse with, that by any means I may win them over to religion and goodness. For if I am always shut up in my closet, and spend my

my time in nothing but exercises of devotion, I shall be looked upon as morose and hypocritical, and be disregarded as useless in the world. When this life is ended, we have a whole eternity before us to spend in those noblest employments and highest delights. But man, in this low state of mortality, pays the most acceptable obedience to God, by serving his fellow-creatures.

Perhaps all these considerations are wide from my case. So far from having leisure upon my hands, I have scarce a moment free from the necessary engagements of business and bodily labour. While I am working hard for bread for myself and my family; or attending diligently the commands of a strict master, to whom I am justly accountable for every hour I have; how can I find frequent opportunities for studying the word of God, or much time to spend in devout meditation? Why, happily, much is not required, provided I make the best use of what little I have. Some time I must needs have on Sundays, and this I may improve. I may diligently attend to what I hear at church: I may examine whether my own practice is conformable to what I am there taught: and I may spend some hours in that day, either in good discourse with such as are able to instruct me, or in reading such religious books as are put into my hands. Still enough will be left for cheerful conversation and pleasant walks. Why should either of them be the less cheerful, for a mixture of religious thoughts? What indeed is there so gladdening as they are? Be my
state

state ever so mean and toilsome; as a Christian, if indeed I behave like one, I am equal to the greatest monarch upon earth. Be my misfortunes and sorrows ever so severe; as a Christian, I can look beyond death to an eternity of happiness, of happiness certain and unspeakable. These thoughts, therefore, I should keep upon my mind through the whole week: They should be the amusement of my labour, and the relief of my weariness: And when my heart is thus ready, I shall gladly take every opportunity to sing and give praise. I shall awake early to worship that God, who is my defence and delight; and I shall close every evening with prayer and thanksgiving to Him, whose “ways” are ways of pleasantness, and all whose paths “are peace.” Whenever I can have a quarter of an hour to spare from the necessary business, and the (at fit times) as necessary relaxations of life, which, while they are innocent, moderate, and reasonable, will never be disapproved by that good God, who has created every thing that is comely and pleasant in the world, and invites us to rejoice, and do good all the days of our life; when I have any spare time, I shall gladly spend it in reading, with reverence and attention, some portions of the Bible. In all my common conversation, I shall have my eye continually up to Him, who alone can direct my paths to happiness and improvement, and crown all my endeavours with the best success. I shall try to be something the better for every scene of life I am engaged in: to be something
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the wiser for every day's conversation and experience. And let me not fear; but that if I daily thus faithfully strive to grow in holiness and goodness, be my growth at the present ever so imperceptible, I "shall in due time arrive at the measure of the fulness of stature in Christ."

That I may be better for the last twenty-four hours, let me examine a little what temper I have been in all that time. In general, perhaps, I can recollect nothing much amiss in it: but let me descend to particulars. Things are often very faulty, that appear at first sight very trifling. Perhaps I have so fond a conceit of myself, as to think that I can never be in the wrong. Has any uneasiness happened in the family this last day? Perhaps I think the fault was wholly in others, and the right entirely on my side. But ought I not to remember, that, in all disputes, there is generally some fault on both sides? Perhaps they begun:—But did not I carry it on?—They gave the provocation:—But did not I take it?—Am I not too apt to imagine, that it would be mean entirely to let a quarrel drop, when I have a fair opportunity to reason, and argue, and reproach, to vindicate my injured merit, and assert my right? Yet, is this agreeable to the precepts and example of Him, "who when he was reviled, reviled not again?" Is it agreeable to His commands, who has charged me, if my brother trespass against me, to forgive him, not seven times only, but seventy times seven? Is it agreeable to that Christian doctrine, which exhorts

us,

us, not to think of ourselves highly, but soberly as we ought to think; and that in lowliness of mind every one should think others better than himself? And, alas! how often do I think this disrespect, though a slight one, provoking to *me*? this situation, though a happy one, not good enough for *me*? How often have I had in my mouth that maxim, that a worm if it is trod upon will turn again? Wretch that I am! shall I plead the example of a vile worm of the earth for disobeying the commands of my Saviour, with whom I hope hereafter to sit in heavenly places?

T U E S D A Y.

“**I** MUST work the work of him who sent me, while it is day.”—If our blessed Saviour, infinitely great and excellent, was, when he assumed human nature, so far from being exempted from the general law of labour imposed on our first father and all his race, who is there amongst men, that shall plead an exemption? The duty of employment is twofold. First, as we are active and spiritual beings, ill would it become us to sit wrapt in indolence, and sleep away an useless life. Constant activity, and extensive usefulness, is the perfection of a spiritual being. The Great God himself is infinitely active. “My Father worketh hitherto,” saith our Saviour, “and I work.” In their

various degrees, all the orders of angels are ministering spirits. In the happy worlds above, all is life and activity. And shall man, who is so fond of life, lose half his little portion of it in a lazy slothful state? Shall he quench those sparks of immortality that glow in his bosom, and content himself with being, for three parts of his time, little better than a lump of organized clay? Innocent man in Paradise, was not made for idleness: but guilty fallen man is peculiarly born to labour, and to trouble. Equally just and merciful was the doom pronounced to *Adam*; "In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread." Human nature, corrupted and depraved by the fall of our first parents, would be incapable of employing ease and leisure to any happy purposes. Greatly do we need constant employment to keep us out of the reach of those temptations from within, and from without, that in idleness particularly assault us. Greatly do we need to have much of our minds taken up with perpetual attention to necessary business and hourly duty, that they may not prey too much upon themselves. Labour and pain are the necessary, though unpalatable, medicine of our souls. Shall we refuse to follow the prescription of that heavenly Physician, who drank the bitterest cup for us? Toil and trouble are the just punishments of guilty human nature: Shall we rebel against our awful Judge? Activity and employment are the law of our being: And shall we not obey our sovereign Ruler, our great and good Creator?

What

What then is my proper business and employment, that I may set diligently to it? In most stations of life, this is too evident to be asked: And it is equally certain, that every station, even the very highest, has its proper work and labour, which whoever performs not to the utmost of his power, is a wicked and slothful servant, for we have all a Master in heaven.

Come, then, my heart, let us cheerfully set about our business. Be it study and improvement of the mind, or toil of the body, or industry of the hands: Be it care of our families and domestic affairs: Be it care of the public, and distribution of justice: Be it care of our neighbours, and charity to the poor: Be it education of children, instruction of the ignorant, attendance on the sick, culture of the ground, defence of our country: Whatever it be, let us do it diligently and heartily, as unto the LORD, and not unto men. As subjects, children, servants, let us obey our rulers, parents, masters. And if it be the will of Providence to disable us, for the present, from all active service, by confining us in chambers of sickness, in a weak and useless state, let us set the example of an uncomplaining submission and cheerful resignation; and let patience, at least, have its perfect work.

This submissive, this humble, this obedient disposition, is poverty of spirit. We ought to think nothing beneath us; nor to desire any thing but what is allotted us. We ought to imagine nothing our own, and surely therefore not our
time:

time: Yet how apt are we to think it quite a hardship put upon us, if any small portion of it is to be spent disagreeably, and if we have not hours, and days, and years, to indulge in careless idleness and giddy pleasure!

Among other works, that of reforming my temper is surely a most necessary one. Let me therefore take myself a little to task. How have I behaved the last day?

I have not, perhaps, been positively out of humour: But have I guarded my disposition against every failing? Have I not indulged a nice fancy, in taking some disgust at any of those I converse with; which, trifling as it seems at present, may, in time, quite alienate our minds from one another? A disagreeable look, or manner, too often gives a prejudice against persons who are really deserving. Let me be upon my guard against such prejudices. Let me overlook all trifling infirmities in others: But let me spare them the pain and difficulty of having many such to overlook in me. Let me observe in every thing a perfect cleanliness and neatness: for nothing is so disgusting as the contrary. Let me be mild and civil, moderate and discreet, in all my ways of speaking: Let my behaviour always be easy and obliging, natural and unaffected. Let me always preserve, as much as I can, even under severe trials, a cheerful pleasing countenance: And, among other things, let me try to avoid, as much as possible, falling into those little foolish tricks and peculiarities, which every body is so apt to acquire, without

even perceiving it. I cannot help seeing in others how disagreeable they are, though in them I ought as little as possible to attend to it. But let me watch myself a little, and discover, in order to reform, whatever I may have in me that makes me less agreeable, and therefore less useful, in society.

W E D N E S D A Y.

“AND GOD saw every thing that he had made; and behold, it was very good.”

Such was the face of things at the creation. Every view, that could be taken, was a view of order and beauty, of happiness and pleasure. Too soon, by the frailty and by the guilt of man, this happy state was changed; and through sin, death and misery entered into the world. Every part of our world was affected by the general disorder. The earth produced thorns and thistles. The seasons became unfavourable. The beasts grew wild and savage. And hence sprung a necessity of labour and self-defence. Toil and weariness must be its natural consequence to bodies now become mortal and corruptible. Pain and sickness, the infirmities of old age, the fear of death and sufferings, both for ourselves and our friends, with all that variety of evils that burthen human life; all are the sad effects of sin. The disorder of our minds, the vehemence of our passions, the dimness of our under-

understandings, those tendencies to evil, which even the best people, at some times, must feel strongly working in their bosoms, are the bitter fruits of the original corruption of human nature in the first of men, our common parent. Hence, surely, we should draw the strongest motives of humility, and throw ourselves down, in the deepest abasement of soul, before that God of holiness, in whose "sight the heavens are not pure," and who chargeth his angels with "folly:" "How much more man which is a worm, and the son of man which is a worm?" Unassisted human nature could not be in a more perfect state, than our first parents were created: Infinitely superior, certainly, to whatever we can imagine of good or excellent among ourselves. If they were such frail, such wretched creatures, and so soon forfeited their very beings—Good God! then what is the very best of us! "Let our confusion be ever before us!" "Let the shame of our face cover us."

Strange it may seem, after these considerations, to mention a happy and cheerful enjoyment of our beings, as a serious and important duty. Many good persons, who have deeply dwelt on this dark view of our mortal state, have represented it as utterly unfit and sinful for such creatures, in such a world, to think of any thing but suffering and mourning. But as sure as our heavenly Father is good to all, and peculiarly so to us his helpless new-adopted children, so surely they are widely mistaken. The

blest promise of our redemption was uttered in the same moment with the doom of our mortality, and from that moment all was good again. Pain, and suffering, and sorrow, became remedies to cure our corrupted nature; temptations, but a purifying fire to prove and to refine our virtue; and death, a kind release from toil, a happy admission into a better paradise. Through our blessed Saviour, we have obtained the grace of GOD to guide us in all our ways, and to support us under all our distresses. Through him, in him, we have every thing that can make us happy, unless we wilfully destroy ourselves. "Rejoice, then, in the LORD, all ye righteous; be thankful all ye who are true of heart."

Serious and careful indeed we ought to be, watchful and diligent, humble and submissive: Reflecting deeply on the frailty and vileness of our nature, and the important, the eternal interest that depends on this our short and very uncertain time of trial here. In this sense, we ought to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling," and even to "rejoice before the LORD with reverence." But while we "keep innocence, and take heed to the thing that is right," let our cheerful hearts and looks confess the goodness of our gracious Master, who "gives us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness:" of Him, who has made every thing good and pleasant; who has the tenderest consideration for all our infirmities, and has provided every support and every relief that can make

make our passage thro' this world tolerable and comfortable to us. With joyful gratitude let us accept and improve these his mercies and indulgences. Let us make this world as happy as we can to ourselves and one another: To do this, we need only be good Christians. Our wills being perfectly resigned, will acquiesce, without pain, in whatever disposals Providence may see fit to make of us and ours: And taking "no thought for to-morrow," we shall neither be tormented with vain schemes, nor anxious fears. Our desires being moderate, we shall pass quietly and easily thro' life: And no unruly passions or vehement wishes will discompose our peace. Being free from private interests and selfish views, we shall have no rivalries nor contests with our neighbours. Being in perfect charity with all men, we shall with all be easy, cheerful, friendly; in every thing studying to promote their good and happiness: And in our turn receiving from many of them offices of kindness; and from such as are ungrateful, receiving the greatest benefit of all, a noble opportunity to exercise those duties on which God's forgiveness of ourselves depends. With pleasure and complacence our heavenly Father looks down on every society of his children united in brotherly affection, and gives his blessing to every set of friends, and neighbours, and relations, that perform their mutual relative duties as they ought, and love and delight in one another. Every innocent entertainment, that keeps up the cheerfulness and kindness of society, he

approves. "The voice of joy and health is in the dwellings of the righteous." Our health can alone be preserved by temperance, calmness, and industry. Industry, too, makes the world look beautiful around us. It turns the barren wilderness into a fertile pleasant land; and for thorns and thistles plants the rose-tree and the vine, or sows the tender grass or useful corn. Industry preserves us from inclemencies of weather, and finds some means to supply every want. It procures us wherewith to give alms to the poor, and thereby enables us to lay up a treasure in heaven.

Happiness, then, a great degree of it, is in our power, even at present. But, fools that we are! we forfeit even present happiness, for the indulgence of every peevish, froward humour. Let me examine myself a little on this. As much as I condemn it, am not I often guilty of this unaccountable folly? Am I not readier to cherish unkind suspicions of those I live amongst, than to put a fair and favourable interpretation upon every disagreeable incident? Am I not almost upon the watch to take offence at every trifling disregard? Do I not think it beneath me ever to take the first step towards a reconciliation? Do I not make it a point of honour to keep up resentment, even tho' it pains me? How much happier are they, who go through the world with an easy good-humour! Never suspecting that any body means them ill, who does not really and seriously hurt them: Passing over every trifle: And by placing themselves
above

above all such peevish follies, maintaining more real dignity than those who are the proudest.

T H U R S D A Y.

“**B**LESSED are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” How greatly do we all of us need this blessing, poor guilty creatures, who are every day offending Infinite Goodness, and provoking Almighty Power and Perfect Justice! How then shall we be merciful as we ought? Can this duty be practised by any but the great, or injured;—in relieving the distressed, or in pardoning offenders? Yes: Every one of us may practise it every day we live. It is a great mistake to think there is no superiority, but that which rank and fortune give. Every one of us may, in something or other, assist or instruct some of his fellow-creatures? for the best of human race is poor and needy, and all have a mutual dependence on one another: There is nobody that cannot do some good; and every body is bound to do diligently all the good he can. It is by no means enough to be rightly disposed, to be serious, and religious in our closets: We must be useful too; and take care, that, as we all reap numberless benefits from society, society may be the better for every one of us. It is a false, a faulty, an indolent humility, that makes people sit still and do nothing, because they will not believe that they

they are capable of doing much: For every body can do something. Every body can set a good example, be it to many or to few. Every body can in some degree encourage virtue and religion, and discountenance vice and folly. Every body has some one or other whom they can advise, or instruct, or in some way help to guide through life. Those who are too poor to give alms, can yet give their time, their trouble, their assistance, in preparing or forwarding the gifts of others; in considering, and representing distressed cases to those who can relieve them; in visiting and comforting the sick and afflicted. Every body can offer up their prayers for those who need them: Which, if they do reverently and sincerely, they will never be wanting in giving them every other assistance that it shall please God to put in their power. Even those whose poor and toilsome life can admit of their giving no other help to society, can, by their frugality and industry, at least keep themselves, in a great measure, from being burthensome to the public. A penny thus saved, is a penny given. Dreadful state of those idle creatures, who, dragging on a wretched, profligate life, in laziness and rags, draw to themselves those charities that ought to support the helpless and really disabled poor! Severely, I fear, shall they be accountable for it at the last day; and every one in proportion, who lives an useless and burthensome drone in society. It is our duty to prevent poverty, as well as to relieve it. It is our duty to relieve every other kind of distress as well.

well as the distress of poverty. People who are always innocently cheerful and good-humoured, are very useful in the world. They maintain peace and happiness, and spread a thankful temper among all that live around them.

Thus far in general: but it is well worth considering, in particular, my own duties and obligations. Who are the people that I ought especially to study to make happy? Are they parents? — What a debt of gratitude do I owe them for all their care of me, and for me, in my helpless years? How kindly did they bear with the forward infirmities of my childhood; and shall not I with most affectionate tenderness support and relieve all those which years and cares bring upon them? My more active strength and vigour, my younger spirits and cleaner thoughts, may now make me, in my turn, very helpful to them. If they are good people and good parents, I am sure this is my duty: If otherwise, I owe them one of still higher importance; I owe them the most earnest endeavours I can use for the reformation of their faults, or instruction of their ignorance. This duty extends to all my relations; and to all from whom I have ever received any benefit, or any offices of friendship. If it is my misfortune that any of them should be bad people, though they have been good to me; or if any of those who are related to me are engaged in a wrong course of life; ought I to fly from them, and leave them to ruin? No: gratitude and affection forbid it. Ought I then to encourage vice, and flatter folly,

folly, if it happens among those that I love? This, my higher duty to Almighty God, to truth and virtue, absolutely forbids. What then is to be done? To preserve the tenderest affection for their persons, and keep up and declare openly the strongest abhorrence of their faults; to avoid every degree and every instance of ease and familiarity, that may seem to give the least countenance to their vices: and at the same to employ every art, and every earnest endeavour, that can have the least chance of reclaiming them: to pray for and pity them: to reprove and advise them; to please and oblige them in every thing I innocently can:—But if, upon the whole, I find them irreclaimable, and myself in the least possible danger of being infected by their example,—then to fly them as I would the plague; then to cut off a right hand, and pluck out a right eye, and break through every fondness, and every attachment, that would destroy my highest, my eternal interest. No ties that subsist amongst human creatures can be so strong, can be so dear, or ought to be so indissoluble, as those which for ever bind us to our Creator and Redeemer.

Next to the bonds of nature, are those of choice. Married persons are bound to the observance of very sacred vows; and ought therefore often to recollect them, and examine their conduct by them. Among other things, they should carefully consider, whether they have so strict a guard upon their temper as they ought, now the happiness of another person is made so
greatly

greatly to depend on their easy good-humour and cheerfulness: Whether they assist and improve one another; and whether they are ready to receive assistance and advice as kindly as to give it: Whether they preserve a delicacy of behaviour, a neatness of appearance, a gentleness of manners, a mildness of speech: Whether they enter kindly and affectionately into one another's interests and concerns.

Friends should consider what engagements they are entered into with each other, how strictly they are bound diligently to promote each other's welfare: To think of one another candidly and kindly: To overlook offences, to bear infirmities: To repay kindnesses a thousand fold: To be watchful over each other's conduct: To be true, sincere, faithful, obliging, open, constant: and, To have the generous courage of reproving and opposing each other's follies and faults.

All persons should consider to whom they are accountable for their time, their labour, the superfluity of their fortune: To masters, to friends, to society in general, to the deserving or the helpless poor. Rich persons owe a due portion of their riches to works of charity and to the public: The great owe their protection to merit: And all people owe it to themselves, to improve every moment, and every opportunity, this life affords them.

Surely while I am making these reflections, I cannot omit more literal debts, and more immediate duties. Do I owe money I am not
able

able to pay? Let me retrench every superfluous expence, till my real debts are paid. Let me work and labour indefatigably, till I am enabled to be honest: And let me not be one moment easy, while I unjustly live on the expence of other people, and am hurtful to the society that ought to be the better for me.

It is worth considering, too, what promises I have made. Were they ever so rash, if they engaged me in nothing contrary to innocence, it is my duty to fulfil them. Happy if it teaches me the wisdom to be more cautious for the future!

F R I D A Y.

“**BLESSED** are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted.” Alas! does it not seem from this and many other passages of Scripture, worthy of all observance and of all acceptance, as if it was our bounden duty in this world to lead a melancholy, wretched, uncomfortable life? And can this indeed be the will of Him who delighteth in mercy; who filleth our hearts with food and gladness; and has, in not a few places, expressly commanded us to rejoice evermore? Is there, then, an inconsistency in the duties of religion? God forbid! Yet short-sighted men, capable of taking into one view but a part of the vast and perfectly consistent scheme of duty, and guided too generally by passion or weakness, are perpetually acting

acting as if this was the case. Some free spirits there are who throw off all awful restraint, and, fully satisfied with themselves if they keep within the widest bounds of what is just allowable, indulge without caution in every thing they think so. Their whole time is given up to mirth and jollity: Their whole fortunes, perhaps, are spent upon themselves, without any regard to the calls of charity or duty. Jollily they go on in life, till some unforeseen misfortune stops them short, and throws a deep gloom over their sunny landscape.

Another sort of people, much to be esteemed, and greatly to be pitied, are scrupulous about every thing; and, frightened by a misapprehension of some alarming texts, dare not allow themselves in the most innocent conveniences, and most harmless, and on many accounts useful and commendable, pleasures. Their minds are so truly pious, that they are far from deliberately thinking of the infinitely great and good God as a hard and rigid master: But they act with such a slavish fear, as must needs make those who are less well-disposed frame such horridly false imaginations of him; and their well-meant strictness has the most dangerous tendency in the world.

Between these two extremes undoubtedly lies the plain path of duty: The narrow but not thorny road, that leads through the truest comfort this life can afford, to everlasting happiness in a better.

The natural enjoyments of life are dispensed

to us by a gracious Providence, to mitigate its natural evils, and make our passage through it not only supportable, but, at fit times and seasons, so far pleasant as to make us go on with vigour, cheerfulness, and gratitude: And to give us some kind of earnest of what we are bid to hope hereafter; some kind of faint notion what happiness is; some sensible assurances, that there really is such a thing, though not to be in any high degrees enjoyed on this side of the grave.—Still it is a yet more merciful dispensation of the same fatherly care, that pain and imperfection, satiety and disappointment, should be so mixed up with all our best enjoyments in this low state of being, as to turn our chief aim and desire towards heaven. And let us not fear, unless we wilfully and madly throw ourselves into a giddy round of pleasures on purpose to be intoxicated by them, Providence will mercifully interpose in the fullest tide of innocent prosperity, and make us by some means or other feel an emptiness and dissatisfaction in the best this world can give: Especially may this be hoped by those, who take care to keep their minds always open to such serious thoughts and right impressions as will perpetually present themselves, if not rejected; and who reserve some leisure time in every day, for reading and reflecting.

Our Maker knows so well the weakness of our frame, that he has not left it to us, to inflict upon ourselves, merely by way of punishment, such sufferings as he sees it necessary for
us

us to undergo. That task would be so hard a one, that he would by no means impose it upon us. No: He will take care himself, that we shall unavoidably feel and experience a great deal of that evil which sin introduced into the world; and all he requires of us, is to support it as we ought. He requires nothing contrary to reason and the innocent inclinations of nature. If any of his laws appear harsh and difficult, it is from their opposition to our acquired habits, our prejudices and corruptions. To forgive injuries, to return good for evil, to live peaceably with all men, to be always mild, obliging, and good-humoured, to be kind and patient, charitable and industrious, temperate, sober, and modest, these are no grievous laws to a pure and well-tuned mind; nor can its genuine dictates be better complied with, than by observing them. Still, they will be a very grievous restraint on the licentiousness of our corrupted wills, our heightened passions, and indulged imaginations. To be continually attentive to our conduct in every minute instance, to set a watch before our mouth, and keep the door of our lips, to set scourges over our thoughts, and the discipline of wisdom over our hearts, requires a soberness of mind, a diligence, a resolute adherence to duty, that may undoubtedly deserve the name of self-denial and mortification; though, in effect, nothing so certainly ensures our happiness both here and hereafter. To think we can do this by our own strength, would be presumptuous and vain. Tell a man, helpless with the palsy,

that perfect health is his natural and eligible state; convince him ever so clearly how happy it would be for him to become active and industrious—your eloquence is mockery, and will not help him to the use of a single limb. But though we daily confess that we have “no health in us,” HE who did actually say to the sick of the palsy, “Arise, take up thy bed and walk,” and was immediately obeyed, can effectually relieve our still more helpless state. To this sovereign Physician we can apply for help; and, by the aid he imparts, are enabled to follow the regimen he enjoins; and thus to “go on from strength to strength, till unto the God of gods shall appear every one in Sion.”

Though our comfortable passage through this life, and the attainment of unspeakable blessedness in another, are the allowed, the necessary, the enjoined objects of our pursuit; yet still, in a great degree, we are to renounce ourselves. By sincere humility we are to consider the vileness and wretchedness of our natural state: We are to acknowledge, that of ourselves we are able to do nothing as we ought; and, far from indulging any thoughts of vanity or self-complacence, we are, when we have done our very best, to confess with unfeigned lowliness, that we are unprofitable servants. We are to trust and hope alone in the merits and intercession of our blessed Redeemer; and to own ourselves “less than the least of God’s mercies.” As his creatures, we are to direct all our thoughts and actions to his honour and service. “Whether we eat or drink, or
“ whatever

“ whatever we do, we are to do all to the glory
“ of God.” In every thing, we are to consider
carefully the rule of duty: not scrupulously or
superstitiously; for that tends to the dishonour
of God and religion, as well as to our own dis-
comfort. We are never to do any thing for so
low an end, as merely to gratify our own child-
ish humour; but, in all cases, to moderate and
guide ourselves by the rules of reason and re-
ligion. Thus, even in using the necessary re-
freshments, and easy amusements, and innocent
pleasures of life, we are to behave with a
due sense of that God who is every-where pre-
sent. We are to look up to him with thank-
fulness, as the bountiful bestower of all good;
and cheerfully accept these indulgences for the
ends to which he has appointed them. Food,
to restore our strength wasted in active service,
and to preserve our health and ease: Sleep, to
renew our wearied spirits: Pleasure, to gladden
our hearts, and fill them with pious gratitude
and filial love. This cuts off at once all that in-
temperance that crosses those good purposes,
destroys our healths, distresses our hearts, makes
our lives sluggish and useless, and dissipates or
corrupts our minds. Riches and honours also
are to be received with thanksgiving, by whom-
soever Providence allots them to; but then they
are to be diligently, and carefully, and generously
employed in the best purposes: and even the
richest and the greatest ought to deny them-
selves all indulgences of mere humour and fan-
cy, how well soever they may seem able to af-

ford it, and kindly and faithfully consider the more pressing wants of their distressed fellow-creatures. To answer the purposes of charity, the rich must be frugal, and the poor industrious; and all give freely and discreetly, as proper calls require. Every body, in their turns, to maintain the peace of society, and Christian concord, must repress the little risings of temper, and fretfulness of humour; must be ready to forgive and forget, to indulge and overlook.

It is endless to go on enumerating instances, in which the just, the necessary adherence to our duty, requires us to deny our sinful selves. Our cowardice, our false shame, our vanity, our weakness and irresolution, our fondness and partial affection, our indolence and love of ease: These, and numberless infirmities more, must be struggled with and conquered, when we are called out to encounter dangers; to confess our Saviour before men; to withstand the strong torrent of custom and fashion, of importunity and ill example; to turn a deaf ear to flattery, or candidly acknowledge our errors; to resist solicitations; to give righteous judgment; to forget all our private relations and attachments, where justice or public good are concerned; to resign our dearest enjoyments, when it is the will of God we should; to check our sorrows in their fullest flow; and to go on indefatigably improving ourselves and doing good to others, till the night overtake us, "in which no man can work."

The sufferings which it shall please Almighty
God

God to inflict upon us, we are to accept with humble resignation; acknowledging his justice, and submitting to it without a murmur. Thus patiently also we are to receive all the lesser crosses he sees fit to lay upon us; nor ever suffer ourselves to fret or repine at the various infirmities of human nature in ourselves or others. All these we must look upon as parts of that penalty justly inflicted on our first parents' guilt; and heartily thank Him, that he does not, according to the terrifying notions of Popery, either expect us to inflict them on ourselves, or give us the dreadful alternative of a purgatory after death. Uncommanded severities, that are of no apparent use, but to torment ourselves, and sour our natures, and shorten our lives, can never be acceptable to our gracious Maker. Our blessed Saviour, when he mentions fasting as a duty along with prayer and almsgiving, leaves the frequency and strictness of it to our own discretion; and only insists upon one circumstance, which is, that we should avoid in it all hypocrisy and ostentation; and be careful to keep up all ease, good-humour, and agreeableness of behaviour. There are very proper occasions for exercising this duty without the least superstition or moroseness, and where it may tend to the best purposes:—Public calamities, private distresses or temptations, perplexities and difficulties, times of peculiarly solemn devotion, and of resolutely endeavouring to conquer such obstinate faults and ill-habits as, like the dumb spirit in the gospel, can “come out
“only

“only by prayer and fasting.” But where it makes us appear stiff and disagreeable, interferes with the innocent cheerfulness of society, or may influence our health or temper in any wrong way; in such cases, it becomes a hurtful superstition, and as such unallowable. To observe the public fasts appointed by authority, in a manner suited to every person’s strength and ability, with decency and reverence, can have none of these evil consequences: and the practice of this duty, at fit times, and in a reasonable degree, is an excellent remembrancer of the wretchedness of being attached to any sensual gratifications, and the easiness as well as necessity at fit times to forbear them.

S A T U R D A Y.

ANOTHER week is past; another of those little limited portions of time which number out my life. Let me stop a little here, before I enter upon a new one; and consider what this life is which is thus imperceptibly stealing away, and whither it is conducting me? What is its end and aim, its good and its evil, its use and improvement? What place does it fill in the universe? What proportion does it bear to eternity?

This

This mortal life is the beginning of existence to beings made for immortality, and graciously designed, unless by wilful guilt they forfeit it, for everlasting happiness. Compared with eternity, its longest duration is less than a moment: therefore its good and evil, considered without a regard to the influence they may have on an eternity to come, must be trifling to a degree below contempt. The short scene begun in birth, and closed by death, is acted over millions of times, in every age; and all the little concerns of mortality are pursued, transacted, and forgot, like the labours of a bee-hive, or the bustle of an ant-hill. "The thing which hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done, is that which shall be done; and there is no new thing under the sun." Our wisdom, therefore, is to pass through this busy dream as calmly as we can; and not suffer ourselves to be more deeply attached to any of these transitory things, than the momentariness and unimportance of them deserves.

But considering this short life as a probation for eternity, as a trial whose issue is to determine our everlasting state, its importance to ourselves appears beyond expression great, and fills a right mind with equal awe and transport. The important day will come when there shall be a new thing indeed, but not under the sun: for "heaven and earth shall pass away;" but the words of HIM who created them, "shall not pass away."

What then is the good or the evil of life,
but

but as it has a tendency to prepare or unfit us for that decisive day? when “ the Son of Man “ shall come in the clouds with power and great “ glory, and shall send his angels, and shall “ gather his elect from the four winds :” That Son of Man who is the Son of God, “ blessed “ for evermore ;” and once before came down from heaven, and took upon him this our mortal nature, with all its innocent infirmities and sufferings; and subjected himself even to the death of the cross, that he might redeem us from all our sins, and obtain the gift of everlasting life for all who should not willingly frustrate this last and greatest effort of divine mercy!

What then have we to do, but with love and gratitude unutterable to embrace the offers of salvation, and henceforth become in every thing his true and faithful disciples? To whom should we live, but to Him who died for us? To whom should we give up ourselves, but to Him who gave up himself for us? whose “ yoke is easy, “ and his burden light.” In whom should we trust, but in Eternal Truth? In whom should we cheerfully hope, but in Infinite Goodness? Whom should we copy, but HIM, who was made like unto us in all things, sin only excepted, and has left us an example, that we should follow his steps? which if we do faithfully to the utmost of our power, his grace shall so assist us, that in the end we shall be where he is, to behold his glory, and partake his bliss.

Let me think then, and think deeply, how I have employed this week past. Have I advanced
in,

in, or deviated from, the path that leads to life? Has my time been improved or lost; or, worse than lost, mispent? If the last, let me use double diligence to redeem it. Have I spent a due portion of my time in acts of devotion and piety, both private, public, and domestic? and have they been sincere, and free from all mixture of superstition, moroseness, or weak scrupulosity? Have I, in society, been kind and helpful, mild, peaceable, and obliging? Have I been charitable, friendly, discreet? Have I had a due regard, without vanity or ostentation, to set a good example? Have I been equally ready to give and receive instruction and proper advice, careful to give no offence, and patient to take every thing in good part? Have I been honest, upright, and disinterested? Have I in my way, and according to my station and calling, been diligent, frugal, generous, and industrious to do good? Have I, in all my behaviour, consulted the happiness and ease of those I live with, and of all who have any dependence upon me? Have I preserved my understanding clear, my temper calm, my spirits cheerful, my body temperate and healthy, and my heart in a right frame? If to all these questions I can humbly, yet confidently answer, that I have done my best: If I have truly repented all the faulty past, and made humble, yet firm and vigorous and deliberate resolutions for the future; poor as it is, the honest endeavour will be graciously accepted: And I may to-morrow gladly and securely approach the sacred table, and partake that bread
of

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of life, which our blessed Saviour gave; to nourish all goodnests in those who receive it worthily; and to be not only the means of grace, but the pledge of glory. Amen and Amen!

F I N I S

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